

**LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY, CHARISMA, AND CULTURE REDEFINED:  
ACTS 5:1–11; 8:14–24; 15:7–11: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY IN RESPONSE TO  
THE NEED OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AND AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY**

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Abstract

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*Resilient leadership and ethics are crucial to the success and stability of governments, corporate bodies, and institutions. Often, it seems, the need to keep an institution afloat takes priority, and leaders learn to ignore the qualms of their conscience when ethics threaten to block their ascent up the ladder. The Kenyan Vision 2030, which was built on three pillars; political, economic and social, appeals for a candid conversation on strong leadership and values, if only we provide the necessary foundations for achieving it. This paper seeks to examine the narratives of Ananias and Sapphira, Simon the Magician and the Jerusalem Council with the goal of providing both a model for leadership and a biblical theological perspective. This model could be adopted in engaging community life, charisma and culture in relation to the present working of God through his Spirit in the Global South, especially in Kenya. I will endeavor to demonstrate through a narrative study that the verbal repetitions of the words “heart,” “Holy Spirit,” “God” and “test/tempt” thematically link these narratives together. The repeated vocabulary hence suggests that the actions of Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon the Magician’s request (seeking to abuse the gift of the Spirit) are to be read in concert with the seemingly antithetical narrative of the Jerusalem Council. Therefore, reading the demands of the circumcision group at Jerusalem as an abuse of Israel’s culture as God’s people. The findings of the narrative study will be applied to the Kenyan context in an effort to remedy the prevalent abuses in our community, culture, and spirituality.*

**Key words:** Leadership, Community, Charisma, Culture, Verbal Thread, Narrative

### Introduction

There could be no better description of Kenya’s woes than John Maxwell’s statement:

“Everything rises and falls on leadership” (2001, p. 71). One of the major tragedies in Kenya is the irresponsibility of many of its leaders. Alongside prevalent distrust, Kenya has been held back for lack of principled and ethical leadership (Maathai, 2009, p. 25). Wangari Maathai defines leadership as “an expression of a set of values; its presence, or the lack of it, determines the direction of a society, and affects not only the actions but the motivations and visions of the

individuals and communities that make up that society” (ibid.). She further points out that “Leadership is intimately influenced by culture and history, which determines how leadership perceives itself and allows itself to serve: whether it has self-respect, and how it shapes public and foreign policy” (ibid.).

This paper seeks to do a narrative study on Acts 5:1–11; 8:14–24 and 15:7–21 with the goal of demonstrating that Peter’s leadership is a viable model for Kenyan communities. Peter’s leadership will be examined in the context of community, charisma, and culture with their foundation in the biblical text. The study commences with a brief discussion of the problem, and then continues with an alternative approach to resolving the problem which will involve an exegesis of the aforementioned texts, and conclude by applying the principles gleaned from our exegesis to the context. This study will not seek to provide a comprehensive scope of the subject of leadership in Kenya. However, we seek to provoke a serious discussion around the subject of leadership and how it relates to community, charisma, and culture. Until Kenya finds the right foundation for her development agenda, lapses and regrets will continue to occupy a large part of her narrative.

### **State of the context**

In October 2006, Kenya launched Vision 2030, built on three pillars: Political, economic and social, with its foundation in Chapter Six of the Kenyan constitution. The realization of a new constitution in August 2010 provided a framework that enabled changes in governance, freedom of speech and commitment to a Bill of Rights among others. However, recent revelations of corruption, resurgence of terrorist attacks and tensions among ethnic groups threaten the very core of our existence. Wangari Maathai observes that: “African constitutions were in the main written by colonial powers, drawing on the European traditions and not those of the indigenous

populations (2009, p. 121). Kenya's form of governance is modeled on the British parliamentary system – the political, economic and social pillars – upon which Vision 2030 stands.

Like industrialization, corrupt politics treat people as tools and means to an end rather than people to be cared for (Shaw, 2014, p. 131). In pre-colonial Kenya, leaders were charged with the responsibility to serve and care for their people. Food and security were indeed a corporate responsibility for the community. Leadership was earned through demonstration of a reliable character and more so, the young leaders in most communities were guided through a mentorship process (Maathai, 2009, p. 121).

The introduction of the slave trade in Kenya not only brought about degradation of humanity, but also a preference of money over human life. Post-colonial Kenya obtained freedom but also inherited an economic system (capitalism) that was strange to her context. Michael Schluter argues that the underlying capitalist philosophy is against the biblical ethics upon which most of the European and American constitutions were founded. He highlights five areas of conflict and moral flaws, and evaluates two destructive consequences that grow out of these moral flaws. According to Schluter, capitalism is an exclusively materialistic vision, a reward without responsibility, limited liability of shareholders, a people disconnected from place, and inadequate social safeguards. He further argues that these are responsible for family and community breakdown, giant government and giant corporations (Mills & Schluter, 2012, pp. 42–48).

In pre-colonial Kenya, village life was communal. The colonialists and post-colonial leadership failed in finding ways of connecting Kenya's history and culture to the good and new culture they had brought about. This stripped Kenyans of their point of reference; hence their

antennae to the future were seriously damaged. Maathai states,

Conversely, without culture, a community loses self-awareness and guidance, and grows weak and vulnerable. It disintegrates from within as it suffers a lack of identity, dignity, self-respect, and sense of destiny. People without culture feel insecure and are obsessed with acquisition of material things and public displays, which give them a temporary security and that itself is a delusional bulwark against future insecurity. We see this in many places in Africa today...while most of us know what might constitute a French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, or Indian culture, it is impossible to speak meaningfully of a South African, Congolese, Kenyan, or Zambian culture. (2009, pp. 160–161)

It is evident that the political, economic and social pillars upon which our development agenda rest are crumbling under the flaws of democracy and capitalism and hence, an urgent need for alternative foundation and pillars. Tomas Sedlacek writing the foreword in “After Capitalism” points out that:

The biblical texts being the foundation stone of our western civilization, not only can reawaken the soul, but also can provide some very practical guidelines for the institutions and markets that have gone awry without anybody really examining them... the problems of economics are not of a mathematical nature– and so cannot be cured by mathematics. It is the philosophy, the question of the soul that must be addressed. (Mills & Schluter, 2012, pp. 6–7).

Sedlacek refers to the biblical text as the spirit and the instruments and institutions of government as the body. Hence, just as the body cannot function without the spirit, also our systems, instruments, and institutions cannot function without the biblical text. The development agenda in Kenya needs a spirit that will give life to the body (her constitution, systems, and institutions) if we will fully realize the development agenda. We must find the right foundation and pillars if we are to attain the future to which we aspire. This study will now turn to the biblical text, which informs a good number of constitutions in the world. We will examine Peter’s leadership, the community that produced this leader, how he influenced the community (charisma) and the culture through which he saw his world.

It suffices to justify our choice of these three episodes (Ananias and Sapphira, Simon the Magician and the Jerusalem council). At first glance, the three narratives appear to be completely

unrelated. However, the verbal repetitions of the words “heart,” “Holy Spirit,” “God,” and “test” or “tempt” as shown in the table below thematically link these narratives together hence suggesting that the three narratives are to be read in concert. The actions of Ananias and Sapphira which undermine community life of the newly-founded church, and Simon’s request which seeks to abuse the gift of the Spirit is to be read in concert with the seemingly antithetical narrative of the Jerusalem council. Therefore, reading the demands of the circumcision group at Jerusalem as an abuse of Israel’s culture as God’s people.

<b>ACTS 5:1–11</b>	<b>ACTS 8:14–24</b>	<b>ACTS 15:7–21</b>
Satan filled your heart (5:3)	Your heart is not right before God (8:21) Intent of your heart (8:22)	God who knows the heart (15:8)
Lied to the Holy Spirit (5:3)	Receive the Holy Spirit (8:19)	By giving them the Holy Spirit (15:8)
Lied to God (5:4)	Your heart is not right before God (8:21)	God chose me (15:7,8)
You agreed to test the Spirit of God (5:9)	Simon tempts Peter (8:18)	Why are you putting God to test (15:10)

The burgeoning interest in caring for the poor in Kenya, the charismatic revival and the efforts to contextualize Christianity and allow Christ to dialogue with our cultures calls for candid conversation. Guidelines on how the Christian faith, spreading rapidly like a wildfire through the Global South, should be lived are necessary. These episodes provide the necessary insight to responsibly handle the emerging Christian populations, the accompanying challenges in the Global South, and the leadership required in realizing its goals. The next three sections will focus on a narrative study of the three passages under study in this paper.

### **Peter and the community at Jerusalem (5:1–11)**

The presence of the Greek word “δέ” in verse 1 prepares the reader for a contrast of the character being introduced with the previous character — Barnabas. Ananias is simply introduced as a certain man. This man with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property. The reader is by now accustomed to people selling their property and bringing the proceeds to the feet of the Apostles to support the community (4:34–37). However, these two characters introduce something strange into the process. Ananias, with the knowledge of his wife Sapphira, keeps back some of the proceeds for himself. Sapphira is viewed as an enabler to Ananias. He brings part of the proceeds and lays it at the feet of the Apostles.

The verb for “kept back” (ἐνοσφίσατο) is similar to one used in reference to Achan coveting and taking of the sacred spoils in (Josh. 7:1). It could be rendered “misappropriate” or “embezzle funds.” It is a verb associated with financial fraud as used in 2 Macc. 4:32, (Johnson, 1992, p. 88; Bock, 2007, p. 221). Howard Marshall also sees similarities between the Ananias and Sapphira episode and the action of Achan in Joshua 7. However, he acknowledges the insufficiency of proof that one episode was created on the basis of the other (1980, p. 111).

Peter is here portrayed as the leader of the community; he takes the responsibility to interrogate Ananias. Peter indicates that Ananias' act is inspired by Satan. The Greek word ἐπλήρωσεν could be translated as "fill someone's heart to the extent of possessing and influencing his decision" (Danker, Arndt, & Bauer, 2000, p. 828), hence it refers to the control Satan had on Ananias and Sapphira. The lying was as a result of being filled with Satan. This is a contrast to the community at Jerusalem which is reported as being filled by the Holy Spirit and having all things in common. Bock notes,

There is a spiritual element to life in the community alongside the human dimension. Satan is trying to undermine what the community represents. Ananias is accused of being unfaithful in very direct terms. He is to be honest before and to God, but his integrity is severely compromised, and Peter and God know it. Such lying is dangerous to the community and dishonors God. (2007, p. 222)

Solomon echoes the same truth; "A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin" (Prov. 26:28). Peter clarifies that the lie or craftiness was not done to the Apostles but to God who through the Holy Spirit has made his abode among the Christian community in Jerusalem. At the mention of God, Ananias falls down and dies. Three hours later, Sapphira appears ignorant of what had happened to her husband. Peter further demonstrates the ability to understand the secrets of men; he confronts Sapphira just as he had done to Ananias. Sapphira, true to her agreement with Ananias, confirms that what the husband brought was all they had received from the sale of land. On finding out what happened to the husband, she also falls down and dies.

Ananias and Sapphira could also be read in the light of the Eden episode in Genesis 3. They are victims of Satan's craftiness just like Adam and Eve in Genesis. Adam and Eve desired something for themselves too. The principle of selfishness and craftiness is present in both narratives. Satan attempts to pollute the newly created community through a couple just as he did

with the first couple in Genesis. However, just as the second Adam (Jesus) overcame him in the wilderness after the baptism of water and the Spirit, his followers filled by the Spirit are able now to confront Satan in the power of the Holy Spirit and expose his lies and align themselves to God. Both the attempts to pollute Eden and the ensuing judgment meted out to the deceivers are very severe.

A. E. Harvey provides an example of a similar experiment in communal living at about the same time (2004, p. 402). The Qumran community dismissed such offenders from the community. Due to the oaths that bound them, they ended up starving to death or being received back out of compassion (Josephus Wars 2:143–144). The gravity of the matter in Acts 5:1–11 lies in the fact that the lie was made to the Holy Spirit. Harvey further observes,

From early Old Testament times the attitude required of human beings by God was ‘faith’, that is, readiness to accept whole-heartedly the demands and promises of God. The opposite attitude was called ‘putting God to test’: it consisted of questioning whether God really intended a certain demand or whether he would really fulfill a certain promise. This kind of challenge to God was expressly forbidden (Deuteronomy 6.16, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test”) and Peter was drawing attention to the seriousness of this offense when he asked how the couple had **“agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to test.”** The punishment brought about by Peter was commensurate with the gravity of the sin. (2004, pp. 402–403)

This contrary attitude was present in Eden in Eve and the Serpent’s dialogue, and was also persistent in the wilderness narrative and eventually cost the children of Israel a generation that died in the wilderness.

In summary, this episode portrays Peter as a leader who demonstrates a firm stand against the deception and greed of Ananias and Sapphira. Peter is able to discern the schemes of Satan and resist his efforts to bring down what God is doing in the community of believers. Ananias and Sapphira seek to enjoy the honor and reputation that comes with giving yet not keen on the spirit and principles that accompany the exercise. They fall short of the integrity and true

generosity that characterize the Jerusalem community. Their (Ananias and Sapphira) coalition attracts severe punishment, resulting in respect for God and his righteousness as evidenced in following passage (Acts 5:13).

### **Peter and the community at Samaria (8:14–25)**

The report of Samaria receiving the word reached the Apostles at Jerusalem. The ideal Christian communal life is extended to other geographical locations as per the commandments of Jesus (Acts 1:8). It is not clear why the community in Jerusalem decides to send envoys to Samaria. Among other reasons, the need for the same quality of life and community may have informed the Apostles' decision to send Peter and John to Samaria. Other scholars have interpreted this act to mean that Philip's work needed approval (Bruce, 1990, p. 220; Spencer, 1992, pp. 188–192) but Gaventa reads Peter and John's journey as an inspection trip (2003, p. 138). Peter and John seem to know exactly why they were dispatched to Samaria.

On arrival, they pray for the Samaritans to receive the gift of Holy Spirit. Prayer is closely associated with the Apostles' undertakings. Luke constantly characterizes the Apostles as people of prayer, consequently portraying Peter in the same light, thus characterizing Peter as one who depends on God through prayer. Jesus' instructions to the Apostles emphasized the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of his witnesses. Luke further characterizes Peter and John as Apostles who are keen to see the Holy Spirit take his position in the lives of believers.

Their prayer is specific: that “that they may receive the Holy Spirit for he had not yet fallen on any of them” (Acts 8:16). The tongues of fire viewed as a theophany of the heavenly temple descending on God's new Israel at Jerusalem is attested to in Samaria, both authenticating and connecting the communities in Samaria and Jerusalem. The narrator clarifies that despite the deliverance and healings reported, the believers at Samaria have not yet been

marked out as Jesus' disciples, who are distinguished by baptism with the Spirit just as John's disciples were distinguished by baptism in water. The sign of the heavenly temple descending on the Samaritan community is not witnessed yet as we saw it in Jerusalem but the reliable narrator reports they received the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands. The Samaritans can now claim full rights as the true witnesses and representatives of Christ in this part of their world after receiving the Holy Spirit.

Despite Simon the Magician believing Philip's message, he is still portrayed as one outside of the community of New Israel. In verse 18, the author records that Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of hands, and he offered Peter and John money so that he could receive the Holy Spirit. At this point, Simon's mistaken response to what he hears and sees is demonstrated clearly. Several things come to the reader's mind at this point. Peter's lack of silver and gold (3:6) comes into play, in the light of Simon's offer. Peter's ability to discern the activities of Satan again is manifest (5:3). A pattern seems to emerge, where Satan seeks to infiltrate the communities of New Israel as they get established. In Acts 5, through deceit and craftiness Ananias and Sapphira attempt to gain entrance into the community cunningly, following the Eden temptation model. It is interesting that Simon the Magician uses an imperative to address Peter—Δότε καμοι την εξουσίαν ταύτην "Give me this power also" (Acts 8:19). Peter responds sternly to Simon condemning him to perish with his money. He demonstrates his fidelity to the course of Christ by refusing to be corrupted. He states that the gift of God is not for sale and trying to do so is wickedness. Those who espouse Simon's point of view cannot be filled by the Spirit. The desire to be great and in control is still present in Simon whom the author mentions as one who believes (8:13). It is apparent that Simon has not truly repented of his old ways—"your heart is not right before God" (8:21, 23).

The question of Simon's faith in Christ is rather troubling. Peter counsels him to repent of his wickedness and pray, perhaps he may be forgiven. To this Simon responds with a plea for Peter's prayer that none of the things spoken by him may affect him. The fact that Simon is unable to participate in prayer, one of the common characteristics of the members of the New Israel, raises concern in regard to his conversion. Second, since Simon is reported as having believed and been baptized, it may be correct to infer that Peter and John may have laid hands on him but he was not filled with the Holy Spirit like the rest of the believers at Samaria. His failure to be filled by the Spirit may suggest his exclusion from the community of believers hence setting his faith in Christ suspect. Thus, history continues to portray him as being in opposition to the activities of the Kingdom of God.

Luke characterizes Peter in chapter 8 as the obedient messenger from Jerusalem, sent to supervise or inspect the work in Samaria. On arrival, Luke shows him as one who relies on God through prayer and is focused on ensuring the promise of the Father is experienced among believers. Peter stands out as a bold and courageous leader in addressing Simon's vice in the community, a virtue enabled by his ability to discern the hearts of men just as in chapter 5. By the fact that he advises Simon the Magician on how to avert judgement (repent and pray, Acts 8:22), Peter is portrayed as loving and caring, not willing that any one should perish. Simon the Magician is portrayed as double-minded, neither here nor there. He envies the authority to bestow power, willing to buy his way to the authority in order to continue holding Samaria at ransom, enslaving them by his magic now made even more powerful. This section of our study also shows that not all spiritual power is positive. There is true spiritual power represented by Peter, John and Philip and false spiritual power represented by Simon the Magician.

### **Peter and the Jerusalem Council (15:1–21)**

The growth of the church continues to present both social and doctrinal challenges. Made up of both Jews and Gentiles, the early church begins to experience deep cultural conflicts that threaten to tear the group apart. Ben Witherington notes that Luke portrays the Church as being good at conflict resolution (1998, p. 450). For instance, chapter 5 records the first conflict in the Christian community by Ananias and Sapphira, which was thwarted by Peter through the revelation of the Spirit. The first intrusion was deceptive in nature, best understood through the lens of the Eden narrative. The second conflict is found in chapter 6, the complaint by the Greek speaking widows concerning daily distributions. Indeed the Apostles (Peter) provide an amicable solution to this conflict that could have torn apart the community along ethnic lines. Third, though chapter 8 is not a good example of conflict resolution, it was clearly an effort to corrupt Peter by offering money to buy the gift of the Spirit by Simon the Magician. Chapter 11 presents a fourth and personal challenge to Peter for having fellowship with the Gentiles. This is taken a notch higher by the same group in chapter 15. Verse 1 opens with another intrusion of the space of the Christian community. The reference to the uncircumcised (11:3) and the insistence to circumcise the Gentiles (15:1, 5) and the similar response from Peter in both cases (11:18; 15:12) suggests that the reader examine the two episodes together. Contrary to what the reader is accustomed to in Acts this far, he stumbles over a form of Jewish legalism that contradicts the gospel of salvation for people universally. The fifth intrusion seeks to have the New Israel embrace legalism and relapse into the acts of Jewish law that seek to gain salvation through the works of the flesh. These five attempts to infiltrate the camp of believers and consequent victory by the Apostles speak of the completeness of the church's triumph over the schemes of the enemy in the days of its inception.

Peter is portrayed as a leader wielding great authority in the Church but not necessarily heading the Jerusalem community nor the budding center at Antioch. It is evident that leadership in Antioch is passing to Barnabas (11:22, 30; 13:2) and Paul (13:9, 13; 14:9) by the way the narrator refers to them, whereas the leadership at the Jerusalem church is evidently under James (the brother of Jesus). Representatives of the church at Antioch and the leaders at Jerusalem congregate to discuss these conditions of salvation held against the Gentiles (15:1, 5). Luke shows that these conditions stem from “the party of Pharisees” from Judea. Circumcision was a sign of true children of Abraham (Gen. 17:10–11), which was a physical sign. Peter stands up after a heated dispute (15:2, 7) among the groups involved. He reiterates that God chose him as a mouthpiece in delivering the message to Gentiles. Peter’s assertion in Acts 15:14-18, places him at the same level with Old Testament prophets who spoke for God. He argues that God knows the human heart (Jer.17:10) and on the basis of this knowledge he confirms who has satisfied the conditions of salvation and the baptism with the Holy Spirit. God himself is a witness to the salvation and the infilling of the Spirit among the Gentiles, and proposing any other standards for them will amount to testing the Lord. Peter reemphasizes the fact that God is not partial and he sets the same standards for all Jews and Gentiles alike. Endorsing the conditions set by the “party of the Pharisees” for the entry of Gentiles translates to putting a yoke of bondage on Gentiles; thus, putting God to the test.

Peter’s statement brings to mind an unbelieving Israel in the wilderness. The reader is being led to see the consequences of understanding the work of God among the Gentiles through different lenses other than God himself. Luke allocates only one verse to Paul and Barnabas’ witness which may indicate the significance of Peter’s witness concerning Gentile mission prior

to this council. Paul and Barnabas may be carrying on the mission to the Gentiles, but Peter is accredited for opening the door to the Gentiles in Chapter 10.

James sums up Peter's witness by implying that Cornelius' narrative was actually God's visitation to the Gentiles to take from them a people for himself. James brings on board another witness to this discussion, the prophets. When God sent Peter to Cornelius' house, he confirmed the Gentiles' faith in his word by giving them the Holy Spirit, the new mark of the people of God.

The council resolves that they should not trouble Gentiles who turn to God, thus ceding the demand to circumcise them, but they should write to the Gentiles to abstain from things polluted by idols, strangled meat, blood, and sexual immorality. Acknowledging that from ancient generations, Moses had followers from every city; a confirmation of the Gentiles' inclusion was not an unprecedented matter.

In summary, we see the community of Israel (the party of Pharisees) ready to defend their culture (circumcision) and hold responsible whoever contravenes its standards. Moreover, we see Apostles Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, who also ascribe to the Jewish culture, boldly advocating for change or an amendment of their culture to align it with God's new revelation and working. Both groups are right: It required a dialogue at the Jerusalem council, every party getting a chance to present their position and the others listening. It took God's wisdom to have James, who was evidently of the circumcision party, to connect Peter's revelation and consequently Paul and Barnabas' revelations to the prophets, Amos in particular. This provided a common ground for both groups, informing the resolutions that followed in order to guide fellowship between Jews and Gentiles in Christ. There is a give-and-take principle with every part ceding important ground. We also observe that the biblical exegete requires the enablement of the Holy Spirit if he

will accurately interpret the meaning of God's word and apply it to his context appropriately.

James confirms this by the statement: For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements (Acts 15:28).

In the three narratives under study, Peter is portrayed as a responsible leader in matters of the community, charisma, and culture. He not only speaks for the community but for God as well. He confronts a coalition between husband and wife aimed at embezzling community goods, he confronts an attempt to corrupt him by buying power, and he confronts a closed culture that could have inhibited the growth of the Christian community. The following tendencies are attested: seeking a reputation that does not have a personal cost (5:1–11), making efforts to corrupt leadership (by buying power) and having an impenitent attitude by the Simon the Magician (8:14–24); an attitude that challenges the working of God and his Spirit. In all the three passages examined, the root problem is traced to the heart (5:3–4; 8:21–23; 15:8). It is evident also that the negative actions are ultimately directed to God and not just men (5:3–4; 8:22; 15:10).

### **Application**

Though the realities discussed in this study are relevant to Africa as a whole, we will limit our application to Kenya. However, Africa must learn her lesson early and well enough that the battle of development cannot be fought by appealing to the same mind that created the problem. Truly, we have a giant to fight but not in Saul's armor. It will require us to find our sling and five smooth stones in order to deal with Goliath.

The coalition between Ananias and Sapphira resonates with the political realities in Kenya. One of the pledges given by the nationalists during the struggle for independence was the fair distribution of the "national cake" (Ojuka, 1975, p. 250). However, soon after independence,

this became a major issue that haunts our country to date. The distribution created a platform for ethnicity and nepotism. It degenerated into politics without principle, commerce without ethics and wealth without work ethics (Covey, 1999, pp. 87–93). Politicians, who love reputation without earning it, form coalitions and register companies to embezzle public funds they have not worked for, while a leadership held at ransom by the elites and business people who funded their campaigns watch helplessly. Kenya could borrow a leaf from the community life modeled in Acts 5:1–11. The community had all things in common; the leadership of Peter ensured equity and fairness and sternly rebuked any member trying to defraud the community. The discipline was administered at a family level, which ensured that the unit that forms society was free from adulteration.

Politics is a highly sought after profession and office in Kenya. Aloo Ojuka perfectly captures why this is may be so:

In Africa the politician is virtually at the command of everything. He is the elite. His leadership involves dabbling in government, the economy, [*and*] the military. He interferes in the ‘internal affairs’ of the civil service, heads the queues for loans to run petty distributive enterprises, or for land grabbing, and he pries into the military to ensure that his tribe has preponderance there. He presides over the national universe of power, which is both a means to wealth and to his own glory. And since in Africa the national wealth is small, political office (or close links with politicians) is an indispensable means to individual wealth. This makes the practice of African politics a battle of individual economic survival (1975, p. 235).

In the light of the scenario described above, Simon the Magician’s act also strikes a chord with current matters of politics, wealth and influence. Hence, how Peter dealt with him may serve as a model for Kenyan leadership in dealing with corruption and people who want to use their wealth to buy power. The practice of politicians bribing the electorate so that they may be voted into office is widespread in Kenyan politics. Yet the intention of the politician is not to serve citizens but to enrich themselves and make a name.

Aquiline Tarimo contends that the challenge in Africa (which includes our context, Kenya) is how to integrate ethnic identities into social relationships and political processes and not how to overcome ethnic identities. He further suggests the significance of appropriating ethnic identities into the structure of the nation-state if we will succeed at promoting democracy in Africa (2009, p. 28). In Kenya, we have done the contrary. There are concerted efforts to suppress ethnic identities by promoting Kenyanism at the expense of our primary social identities. This approach will eventually lead to a nation without identity. If properly harnessed, our social identities will provide meaning and content to the nation-state (ibid., p. 29). Tarimo and Manwelo contend that:

The challenge of building up democratic society in Kenya is not only a matter of setting up good institutions and sound laws. Indeed some of the African countries have good laws and good institutions like any other countries of the world. To be sure, democracy is mainly a matter of promoting sound values and right attitudes geared to promote the sense of respect for life, social justice, and the common good...Africa urgently needs a moral revolution (2009, p. 96).

Kenya is made up of over forty tribes with diverse cultures which must be preserved for the sake of their identity and history. Acts 15:1–21 can be engaged to provide guidelines on how to deal with cultural and ethnic issues in Kenya. Open cultures should be encouraged, forums where divergent views will be expressed with respect, a give-and-take attitude should be encouraged and the willingness to cede extreme positions and preferences in the interest of cohesion among conflicting parties. Training should be engaged with the goal of transforming the human heart, since the heart is the source of all our problems that impede development, thus denoting a spiritual element to life in the society alongside the human dimension.

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